

# Conflict Update # 263

November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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## Conflict Assessment

**Russian losses** – 82,020 7510) soldiers killed, 2,861 (+13) enemy tanks, 5,773 (25) armored combat vehicles, 1,850 (+11) artillery systems, 393 (+0) MLRS systems, 208 (+2) air defense systems, 278 (+0) warplanes, 261 (+0) helicopters, 1,511 (+2) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 399 (+0) cruise missiles, 15 (+0) warships/cutters, 4,371 (+35) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 76 fuel bowsers (+0) and 160 (+0) units of specialized equipment.

## Key Takeaways

**The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) escalated claims of Russian territorial gains in Donetsk Oblast** likely to emphasize that Russian forces are intensifying operations in Donetsk Oblast following withdrawal from the right bank of Kherson Oblast. They their forces completed the capture of Mayorsk (20km south of Bakhmut) on and of Pavlivka (45km southwest of Donetsk City) after several weeks of not making claims of Russian territorial gains. (**Comment** – they claimed this last week as well). As ISW assessed previously, Russian forces will likely recommit troops to Donetsk Oblast after leaving the right bank of Kherson Oblast, which will likely lead to an intensification of operations around Bakhmut, Donetsk City, and in western Donetsk Oblast.

Russian forces will likely make gains in these areas in the coming days and weeks, but these gains are unlikely to be operationally significant. The Russian MoD is likely making more concrete territorial claims in order to set information conditions to frame Russian successes in Donetsk Oblast and detract from discontent regarding losses in Kherson Oblast.

**Russian milbloggers seized on Ukrainian President Zelensky's visit to Kherson City** to criticize Russian military capacity more substantively than in previous days during the Russian withdrawal from the right bank of Kherson Oblast.

They largely complained that Zelensky arrived in Kherson City and was able to move around with relatively little concern about Russian strikes in his vicinity and questioned why Russian forces did not launch strikes on Zelensky. One prominent milblogger noted that this shows that Russia does not want to win the war and criticized Russian forces for allowing Zelensky to step foot on "Russian territory."

They have notably maintained a relatively muted response to the Russian loss of the right bank in the past days, as ISW has previously reported. The clear shift in rhetoric from relatively exculpatory language generally backing the withdrawal as a militarily sound decision to ire directed at Russian military failures suggests that Russian military leadership will likely be pressured to secure more direct gains in Donetsk Oblast and other areas.

**Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin** continues to establish himself as a highly independent, Stalinist warlord in Russia, becoming a prominent figure within the nationalist pro-war community. He commented on a Russian sledge hammer execution by video of a reportedly exchanged Wagner prisoner of war, Yevgeniy Nuzhin, sarcastically supporting Nuzhin's execution and denouncing him as a traitor to the Russian people.

Most sources noted that Wagner executed Nuzhin following a prisoner exchange, but a few claimed that Wagner kidnapped the serviceman via Prigozhin's connections to the Russian FSB and Russian General Staff.

Prigozhin claimed that Nuzhin planned his escape to free Ukraine and used the opportunity to compare Nuzhin to Russian elites who disregard the interests of the Russian people and fly away from Russia's problems in their personal business jets. The Russian nationalist community overwhelmingly welcomed the public punishment of the supposed deserter, noting that Wagner command is undertaking appropriate military measures to discipline its forces. **(Comment** – through this reaction we can assess their views of rapes and killings in occupied Ukrainian territories by Russian soldiers and Wagner personnel in particular).



Some milbloggers even compared the execution to Joseph Stalin's "heroic" execution of Russian Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky who had also fled Bolshevik Russia, further confirming Prigozhin's appeal among the proponents of Stalin's repressive legacy. He is taking actions that will resonate with a constituency interested in the ideology of Russia's national superiority, Soviet brutalist strength, and distasteful of the Kremlin's corruption, which Russian Putin has used as a political force throughout his reign.

Prigozhin is steadily using his participation in the Russian invasion of Ukraine to consolidate his influence in Russia. One milblogger voiced a concern that integration of Wagner mercenaries into Russian society is "the destruction of even the illusion of legality and respect for rights in Putin's Russian Federation." The milblogger added that Prigozhin is seizing the initiative to expand Wagner's power in St. Petersburg while Russian security forces are "asleep." Such opinions are not widespread among Russian nationalists but highlight some concerns with Prigozhin's rapid expansion amid the Russian "special military operation" and its implications on the Putin regime.

Prigozhin, for example, has requested that the FSB General Prosecutor's office investigate St. Petersburg Governor Alexander Beglov for high treason after St. Petersburg officials denied a construction permit for his Wagner Center in the city. He had also publicly scoffed at the Russian bureaucracy when asked if his forces will train at Russian training grounds, likely to further assert the independence of his forces. Prigozhin's unhinged antics in the political sphere are unprecedented in Putin's regime.

**Comment** – Prigozhin is a convicted criminal and on America's list of sanctioned Russian individuals).

**Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations** on the Svatove-Kreminna line and clashed with Russian troops near Bilohorivka.

**Russian forces unsuccessfully** attempted to regain positions in northeastern Kharkiv Oblast.

**Russian forces intensified offensive operations** in Donetsk Oblast and claimed to have gained territory around Bakhmut and southwest of Donetsk City.

**Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian troops** launched an unsuccessful raid onto the Kinburn Spit.

**Putin signed additional decrees** refining mobilization protocols and expanding military recruitment provisions, likely in an ongoing effort to reinforce Russian war efforts.

**Russian occupation officials** continued to drive the "evacuation" and forced relocation of residents in occupied territories and took efforts to move occupation elements farther from the Dnipro River.

**'This is what Russia has to say on the issue of peace talks': Ukraine** - Ukraine's minister of foreign affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, says the missile attacks across Ukraine "is what Russia has to say on the issue of peace talks."

On Twitter, he wrote, "Russian missiles are killing people and ruining infrastructure across Ukraine right now. This is what Russia has to say on the issue of peace talks. Stop proposing Ukraine to accept Russian ultimatums! This terror can only be stopped with the strength of our weapons & principles."

**Missile attacks heard across Ukraine** - Russia launched 'around 100' missiles, says Ukraine's air force spokesperson

According to Kyiv, Russian forces launched "around 100" missiles against Ukraine in a wave of attacks targeting energy infrastructure that led to power outages and forced shutdowns.

"Around 100 missiles have already been launched. The occupiers surpassed October 10, when they launched 84 missiles," air force spokesman Yuri Ignat told Ukrainian television.

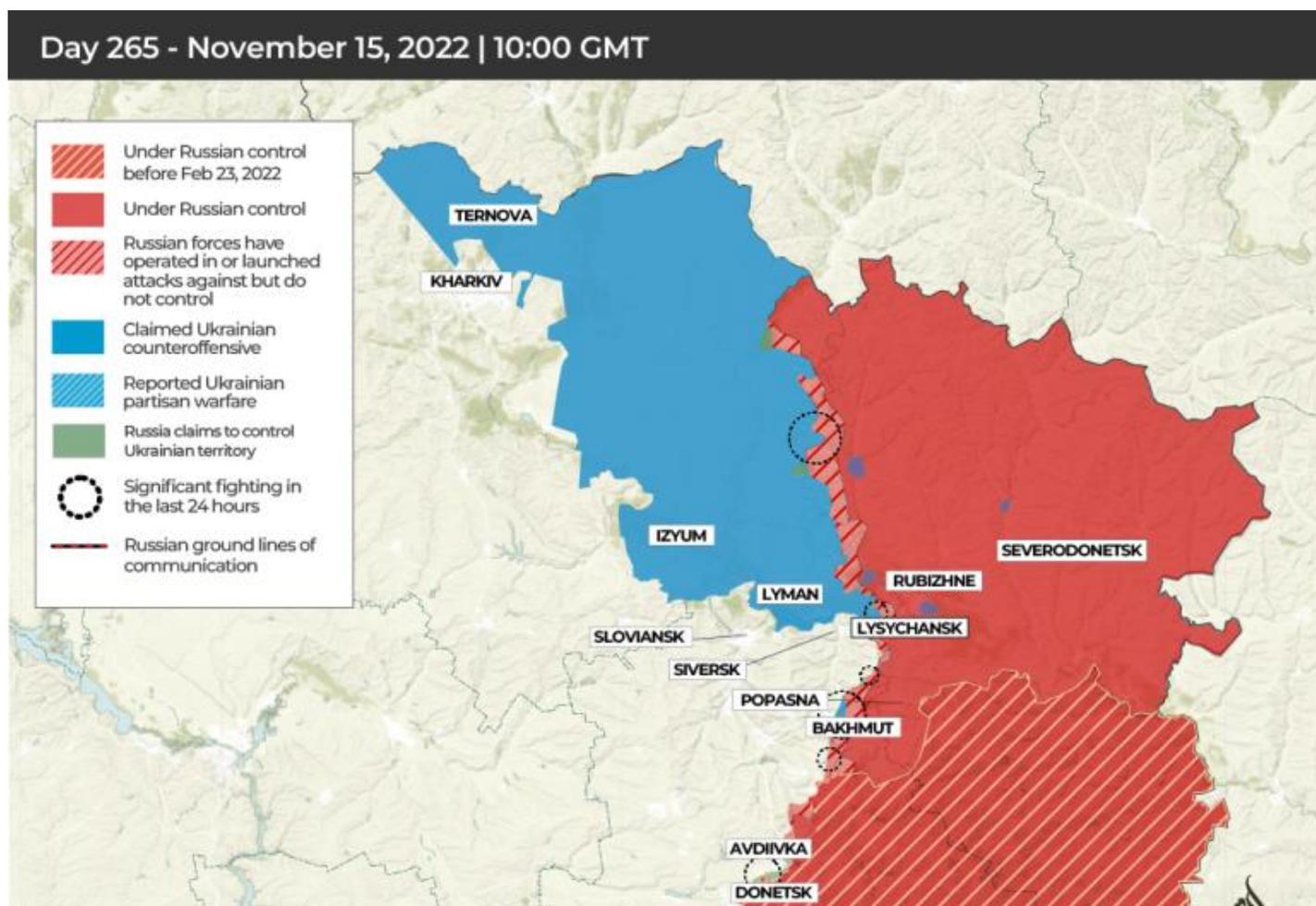
"Critical infrastructure facilities are their primary target. Some missiles were shot down, but information on that needs to be clarified," he added.



**The situation in Ukraine is ‘critical’ after Russian airstrikes, says Ukrainian presidency** - The Ukrainian presidency says the situation across the country is “critical” after a wave of Russian airstrikes that left large parts of the country in the dark.

The deputy head of the president’s office, Tymoshenko, said, “Russian terrorists carried out another planned attack on energy infrastructure facilities. The situation is critical. “The situation in the capital is extremely difficult,” he added.

**Eastern Ukraine: (Eastern Kharkiv Oblast-Western Luhansk Oblast)** - Ukrainian forces continued their counteroffensive operations on the Svatove-Kreminna line. Geolocated footage confirmed Ukrainian forces liberated Makiivka, approximately 23km southwest of Svatove.



Commander of the Russian combat army reserve unit BARS-13, Sergey Femchenkov, claimed the situation on the Svatove frontline “escalated,” forcing Russian forces to retreat from the Makiivka area. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported ongoing clashes in the direction of Novoselivske, Volodymyrivka, and Stelmakhivka (all just northwest of Svatove) in the direction of the R66 highway.

Some Russian milbloggers noted motorized rifle elements of the 1st Tank Army are holding defensive positions in the vicinity of Novoselivske. The Russian MoD also claimed Ukrainian forces continue to attack Russian positions in the Chervonopopivka area, fewer than 10km northwest of Kreminna.

The Ukrainian General Staff (UGS) reported its forces stopped Russian assaults near Torske, about 16km due west of Kreminna and also continued to target Russian logistics on the Svatove-Kreminna line, and geolocated footage showed the aftermath of a Ukrainian HIMARS strike on a Russian base on Miluvatka, just south of Svatove.

Ukrainian and Russian forces engaged in clashes northwest of Lysychansk. UGS reported Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks on Bilohorivka, Luhansk Oblast, approximately 13km northwest of Lysychansk.

Russian sources for the second time since November 7 claimed that Wagner Group and LNR units broke Ukrainian defenses in Bilohorivka and entered the settlement.

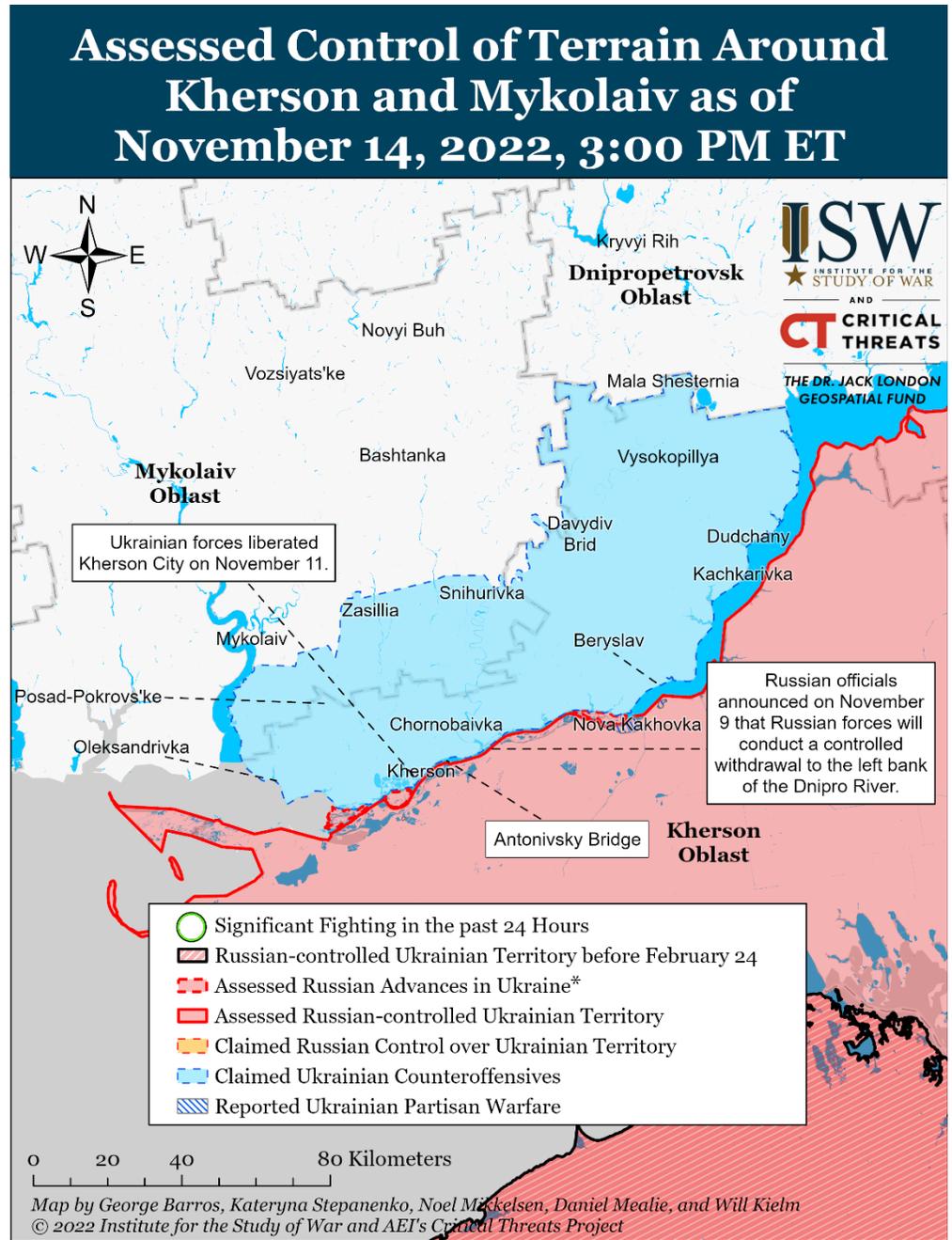
Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to regain positions in northeastern Kharkiv Oblast. Ukrainian and Russian sources claimed a Russian attack helicopter conducted a sortie against Ukrainian positions in Ternova (about 31km northeast of Kharkiv City), and a Russian milblogger noted that Russian forces failed to get a foothold in the settlement.

Russian forces also launched missile strikes from S-300 air defense systems on an enterprise in Kharkiv City.

**Southern Axis** - Note: ISW, whom we quote from, will henceforth report on activities in Kherson Oblast as part of the Southern Axis in this and subsequent updates. Ukraine's counteroffensive in right-bank Kherson Oblast has accomplished its stated objectives, so ISW will not present a Southern Ukraine counteroffensive section until Ukrainian forces resume counteroffensives in southern Ukraine.

Russian forces continued defensive actions on the left bank of Kherson Oblast and geolocated satellite imagery shows newly created Russian defensive lines along the left bank of the Dniro, east of Beryslav around Hornostavka (28km northeast of Beryslav), Liubymivka (8km southeast of Beryslav), and Petropavlivka (25km southeast of Beryslav).

Additional satellite imagery shows development of Russian defensive lines in Lukyanivka (16km southeast of Beryslav) between October 8 and November 10. Ukrainian military sources reported Russian troops are conducting defensive preparations on the left bank and striking Ukrainian positions and residential communities on the right bank.



The spokesperson for Ukraine's Southern Forces, Nataliya Humenyuk, stated that Russian forces struck an abandoned equipment concentration in Chornobaivka (just northwest of Kherson City), which the Russian MoD claimed was a strike on a Ukrainian command post.

Ukrainian sources also stated Russian forces conducted a mortar strike on the private sector of Hornostaivka, a settlement on the left bank of the Dnipro River, because civilians refused to evacuate.

Russian sources widely claimed Ukrainian troops launched a limited raid and attempted to land on the Kinburn Spit on the night of November 13 and 14. Russian milbloggers reported Ukrainian landing groups formed in Ochakiv, Mykolaiv Oblast, and attempted to land on the Kinburn Spit at Pokrovske, but that Russian forces destroyed the grouping during the ensuing battle. Ukrainian sources did not comment on these claims. Russian milbloggers voiced concerns that this raid is indicative of Ukraine's ability to land on the left bank of the Dnipro River.

Russian forces continued routine artillery, air, and missile strikes in Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts and on the right bank of Kherson Oblast.

Ukrainian sources reported Russian forces launched anti-aircraft missiles at Ochakiv, Mykolaiv Oblast which their sources reported was intended to disrupt Ukrainian fire control over the Kinburn Spit.

Ukrainian forces notably struck Russian concentration areas on the left bank of Kherson Oblast on November 13 and 14 and targeted personnel concentrations in Dnipro, Chaplynka, and Hola Prystan.

**Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts** (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)

Putin signed additional decrees refining mobilization protocols and expanding military recruitment provisions, likely in an ongoing effort to reinforce Russian war efforts and decreed foreign citizens can serve in the Russian armed forces on November 14. The decree also allows Russian officials to conscript Russian dual-nationals or foreigners with residence permits. Such provisions will allow the Kremlin to recruit forces internationally and among immigrant populations in Russia. Recruitment of foreigners can also ignite further ethno-religious conflicts that have been plaguing Russian ad hoc forces, however.

Putin is establishing enforcement measures for censorship of foreigners with acquired Russian citizenship, which would allow military recruitment officials to further carry out covert mobilization and respond to criticism of the failures of the Russian military campaign in Ukraine.

He proposed an amendment that would deprive people of their acquired Russian citizenship if they spread "fakes about the Russian Armed Forces" or affiliate with "extremist organizations" that advocate against Russian territorial integrity. The Russian State Duma is also considering a law that will deprive residents of acquired Russian citizenship if they surrender or evade military service.

Both proposals excluded Russian-born citizens and are likely attempts to silence immigrant groups and ethnically based civil society in Russia. The amendment would task the Russian FSB with prosecuting individuals with such views, and Putin may be attempting to set up an internal repression apparatus. ISW previously assessed that Putin has never built an internal repression apparatus like the Soviets, instead relying on control over the information space. (**Comment** – Russia employs a huge number of foreign workers from surrounding Caucasus states which depend on wages sent back to their countries as revenue).

Putin may also be refining conditions for future force-generation efforts, such as a new wave of mobilization. He decreed that individuals with drug possession and consumption criminal charges will not be able to sign a contract with the Russian Armed Forces, likely in an effort to appear to address instances of substance abuse among new recruits and

mobilized men. It is unclear if Russian officials will actually follow Putin's order prohibiting individuals with drug-related charges from serving, but the Wagner Group private military company will likely continue to recruit these individuals regardless of Putin's order regarding the conventional Russian military.

Russian authorities continue their struggle to integrate combat forces lacking a coordinated central command structure. Putin eliminated one inconsistency in Russian and DNR and LNR force-generation policy by decreeing demobilization of students in occupied Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts on November 13. The students were mobilized as part of DNR/LNR efforts rather than as part of the general Russian mobilization effort. The DNR and LNR will likely maintain their covert mobilization practices to ensure a supply of reinforcements, however.

Ukraine Resistance Center stated on November 14 that Russian forces continued to forcibly mobilize students in Donetsk and Luhansk from universities. It is unclear whether DNR and LNR officials had any input into Putin's decision, though DNR Head Denis Pushilin thanked Putin for giving DNR students the same opportunity as students in "other regions of Russia."

A prominent Russian milblogger also noted such issues will not resolve instantly due to divergences between DNR, LNR, and Russian laws. Another noted Russian hospitals continue to deny treatment to DNR and LNR servicemen, and it is likely that Russian Armed Forces' disparaging attitude towards non-Russian forces will persist throughout Russian efforts to consolidate the proxy republics' and Russian Federation's legal systems.

The resolution of discrepancies between Russia and forces the Kremlin is working to absorb has contributed to friction between the force groups, as ISW has previously reported.

The aftermath of partial mobilization is continuing to have domestic social ramifications in Russia. Social media footage from November 13 shows a large group of mobilized servicemembers in Patriot Park, Moscow Oblast, protesting against the poor quality of their training and threatening their commander for disregarding training and material necessities. The protestors angrily questioned why mobilized recruits are conducting small-arms fire exercises at tank training grounds.

Families of forcibly mobilized servicemembers similarly continue to claim that Russian command deployed their loved ones to the frontlines in Ukraine without training or equipment and stated that they have lost contact with their relatives. Sverdlovsk and Voronezh military registration authorities are reportedly refusing to issue the badge numbers of certain mobilized servicemen, which makes it impossible for families to view information about service payments belonging to their deceased loved ones on the battlefield.

**Comment** – It is worth taking note that the protests surround training and equipping, not that Russia is illegally invading Ukraine.

**Downplaying the fall of Kherson, Moscow aims to freeze war** - The liberation of Kherson by Ukrainian forces on November 11 was both predictable and surprising. The strategic imperative for withdrawing Russian troops from the indefensible position along the west side of the Dnipro River had been abundantly clear long before the "difficult decision" presented by the commander of Russian forces in Ukraine, Sergey Surovikin, to Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu on November 9. That rare acceptance of personal responsibility for a major failure was staged so awkwardly in front of television cameras that few international observers or Ukrainian experts were inclined to take the performance at face value. The extremely difficult prospect of completing the retreat amid active fighting was, nevertheless, accomplished in the matter of a couple days without a rout or desperate rush to the few crowded river crossings, which inevitably invited speculations about Ukrainian units' reluctance to enforce a decisive battle (The Bell, November 10).

It is indeed inconceivable that the usually sharp Ukrainian intelligence, with its new skills in processing data from multiple drone and satellite assets, could have missed the movement of some 25,000 enemy troops, which had certainly started a number of days prior to Shoigu's performance. In truth, the victory of expelling Russian forces from Kherson, the only Ukrainian regional capital the Russian military has managed to capture since February 24, is so strategically significant that there was no need to dramatize the liberation further with fierce street fighting. Furthermore, Russian battalions are so degraded and demoralized that they cannot be used for reinforcing the exhausted offensive push toward Bakhmut in Donbas. Meanwhile, the highly motivated Ukrainian units can be quickly redeployed for sustaining the momentum of breaking through multiple weak points in Russia's defensive lines (Grani.ru, November 10).

The quite unusual public declaration of intent to withdraw from the fortified positions around Kherson was supposed to serve as Moscow's invitation to Kyiv to pause the high-intensity operations and perhaps even proceed to a de facto ceasefire (Nezavisimaya gazeta, November 8). In Kremlin calculations, Ukraine can be satisfied with the disappearance of Russia's strategic bridgehead, from which a new offensive toward Mykolaiv and Odesa could have been launched early next year, and now, Russian forces will not be able to plan a large-scale winter campaign in Donbas (Svobodnaya pressa, November 11). Yet, what these assumptions fail to account for is the firm resolution in Ukrainian society to keep inflicting defeats on the aggressor, which translates into a rejuvenated fighting spirit among the Ukrainian forces, something unimaginable for the Russian top brass on their side (Kommersant, November 12). It is becoming perfectly clear to Ukraine that Russia needs a pause for rebuilding its beaten battalions and turning the hastily mobilized recruits into something resembling combat units—and Kyiv has no intention of granting the enemy such a timeout.

What is also plainly clear for Ukrainian leadership is that a hypothetical ceasefire will not lead to substantial peace talks, because by proceeding with the constitutionally confirmed annexation of four regions, Putin has effectively burned all bridges to territorial compromises, creating an irreconcilable conflict (RBC, November 12). The self-defeating recoil from that pompously celebrated act has aggravated the strategic setback of the fall of Kherson, which amounts to a severe breach of Russia's redefined territorial integrity (The Moscow Times, November 11). The relatively smooth execution of the retreat only makes this contrast sharper, as in Moscow's doctrinal terms, territorial integrity is sacrosanct and must be upheld by all available means and at any cost.

The Kremlin has tried to downplay this self-made political disaster, and official media, particularly state-controlled television channels, mention Kherson only elliptically. Most of the noisy "patriotic" bloggers, who in September 2022 loudly decried the defeats at Izyum and Liman, are now being properly kept in line and singing praises to General Surovikin, who took responsibility for drafting and directing the Russian retreat from the brink of a rout.

Yet, the shock of an undeniable defeat is painful for the apologists of war, and this was exposed by Aleksandr Dugin, a proponent of the Russian nationalistic brand of geopolitics, whom Putin respectfully referred to as "our philosopher" (Meduza, November 3). Lamenting Kherson as an unacceptable loss, Dugin has asserted that, in an autocratic state such as Russia, the burden of responsibility rests at the top, and the failure to accept this renders the autocrat in question useless and expendable (Tsargrad.tv, November 11). Few among the Russian elites are ready to subscribe to Dugin's fierce proposition for a total war, but some could perhaps be shaken out of their passive acceptance of the unravelling "special military operation" by such fiery rhetoric (Riddle, November 9).

Putin is acutely aware of a growing understanding among various circles of his subordinates that the poorly executed war will only get worse, and he can only count on the deep mistrust among various clans of courtiers and their fear of his retribution (Republic.ru, November 10). He can also assume that anxieties among the elites are absolutely detached from the deepening discontent in Russian society, which was shocked by the announcement of mobilization and increasingly traumatized by its messy execution (Forbes.ru, November 11). Putin may only have access to carefully doctored data on public opinion and routinely experience the usual demonstrations of slavish loyalty from his aids and

henchmen. Even so, his instincts warned him that attending the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia, in person might be a step too far (RussianCouncil.ru, November 11).

The Kremlin found no opening to produce an initiative that could have shifted the domestic political agenda away from the Kherson debacle or to compensate for it by some asymmetric escalation of the ever-changing war. The Russian military has multiple “hybrid” means of warfare, but every attempt at employing them—from sabotaging the Nord Stream pipelines to withdrawing from, then rejoining, the “grain deal”—has brought more damage than gains, without making any real impact on the course of the kinetic war.

The best hope for Moscow presently is to show readiness for a cessation of hostilities and to encourage Western proponents of a pseudo-peace agreement, in which Ukraine would be compelled to accept hard facts accomplished. This new guise for the corrupt policy of appeasement is set to be torn apart by Kyiv’s firm resolve to celebrate the liberation of Kherson as irrefutable proof of the impending defeat of Russia’s brutal aggression.

**Russia launching mass strikes on Kyiv and other Ukrainian regions** - The Ukrainian capital is targeted by missile strikes, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. According to him, rescue services discovered one dead body at the site.

“The capital is under attack. The Pechersk district has been hit, two residential buildings according to preliminary reports. Several missiles were shot down by air defence systems over Kyiv. Medical workers and rescue services are at the site,” he noted. Trukha Telegram channel published a video allegedly showing what happened to the building that was hit by a missile.

**Polish Foreign Ministry: Russian-made missile falls on territory of Poland, two citizens killed** - Poland’s Foreign Ministry declared that the missile that had fallen on the territory of the country was Russian-made. The ministry clarified that it had fallen on the territory of Poland at 3:40PM local time (GMT+1) in the village Przewodów. Two citizens of Poland were killed as a result. The Russian Ambassador to Poland has been summoned to the ministry.

At the same time, President of Poland Andrzej Duda noted that there is no exact proof of who had launched the missile. The president will also hold a National Security Council meeting tomorrow.

The Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told CNN that he had no information on the explosion in Poland. “Unfortunately, I don’t have any information on that,” he said.

International experts are working together with Poland on the investigation into missiles dropping on its territory, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki declared.

## Peace Talks

**"If Russia wants to end this war, let it prove it with actions"** - Zelenskyy said to the G20 assembly, which he referred to as the "G-19," since Moscow's leader did not attend. "We will not allow Russia to wait, build up its forces, and then start a new series of terror and global destabilization. It is now necessary and possible to stop the destructive Russian war." Zelenskyy's 10 steps involve "radiation and nuclear safety," food and energy security, the release of all prisoners, and an official declaration that all hostilities are officially over.

**Russian officials continue to allege annexed Ukrainian territory is now part of Russia**, including four oblasts hastily annexed in late September—Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhia; and what Ukrainian officials would call a "non-starter" for peace talks.

**The view from the Kremlin:** The world is awash with "distorted history" and "eroding values," Putin said today, according to state-run media TASS. "The attempts by some countries to rewrite and turn inside out world history are becoming more aggressive and, by and large, have an obvious goal with respect to our society, which is at least to

divide us, to take away our reference points and ultimately to weaken Russia and influence its sovereignty," Putin reportedly said.

"This scenario, as we can see, has already been tested in some countries, including Ukraine, and in some other states," said the man whose military has been invading post-Soviet republics for the past almost 15 years. He also said the same attempts to rewrite history are being tried in Russia today, "but we put up resistance in time and firmly enough to defend our interests."

According to the Pentagon, "Since the Russians don't appear inclined to depart, the rest have occupied Ukraine, there's undoubtedly still tough fighting ahead," a defense official told reporters Monday. "But the liberation of Kherson City is a significant accomplishment and a testament to the grit, determination and tenacity of the Ukrainian people and their armed forces as they fight to defend their nation."

**Comment** – The very fact there is this rhetoric is being promulgated and made may be a sign of behind the scene peace talk negotiations underway.

## Containment

**In hosting US B-52 bombers, Australia risks making itself a target for China** - Plans by the US to station up to six B-52 bombers in Northern Australia are part of a broader strategy to incorporate elements of its AUKUS alliance and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue in a multilayered military doctrine designed to contain China and assert US dominance in the South China Sea and Pacific.

The bombers are a part of a broader A\$1 billion (US\$646 million) upgrade of defence facilities, which includes funding to expand both the US-Australian spy base at Pine Gap and the Tindal air force base, where a parking area for the aircraft is expected to be completed by 2026.

The time frame for the completion of this expansion is of particular interest as Western analysts see 2026/2027 as when Beijing could launch a military takeover of Taiwan to fulfil its reunification goal.

Defence analysts in Canberra have taken a tiered approach to establishing Australia's role in securing US interests in the region, which has slowly evolved since the US pivot to Asia in 2011. US and Australian experts inherently believe Taiwan stands between Beijing and its ability to control the South China Sea and project power deep into the Pacific.

To do so, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) would have to neutralize US bases in the first island chain of defence, such as Okinawa, an important logistics staging point in both the Vietnam and Korean wars. The Chinese military's next target would then be the second



island chain, including Guam, which provides critical theatre operations and logistical support for US forces in the region.

In any conflict with China, Guam will be the most forward-operating Pacific station and vital for staging, refueling, repairing and rearming aircraft, making it a significant target for the PLA, which has been practicing bombing runs on the archipelago, according to the US.

## Putin

**Putin is bringing back military training to Russian schools to prepare students for Ukraine war** - Putin is bringing back mandatory military training to Russian schools for the first time in 30 years in the latest sign that he is losing the war in Ukraine.

According to the UK's Ministry of Defence, the aim of the programme is to improve the "poor" quality of conscripts to the Russian army.

## Sanctions

**UNGA adopts resolution on Russia's reparations for Ukraine** - The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution on holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine, TASS reports.

In particular, Moscow will have to pay reparations to Kyiv. The resolution stipulates creation of a special list of damages that Russian inflicted on Ukraine.

The resolution was supported by 94 states, 17 opposed it, and 73 more abstained. Among those who voted against are Belarus, Syria, China, Cuba, Iran, Zimbabwe and Eritrea.

Back in October, the UNGA approved a resolution condemning the unlawful "referenda" in the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics" ("DPR" and "LPR"), as well as the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine. A total of 143 states voted in favour of the resolution, 35 abstained. Five states voted against: Russia, Syria, Nicaragua, Belarus and North Korea. Participants of the session also called on Russia to cancel its decisions on annexing these territories.

**Canada to lay fresh sanctions against Russia, provide new aid for Ukraine** - Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will announce a suite of new sanctions against Russia and more aid for Ukraine during the G20 meetings in Bali, Indonesia, according to sources familiar with the package.

On Sunday, the prime minister said the Canadian delegation will continue to criticize the Russian government for its invasion of Ukraine.

"I have a strong suspicion that the Russian representative will not like what he is going to be hearing from a large number of us at the G20," Trudeau told journalists.

**Russia ships record volumes of gas and steelmaking coal to China** - China imported record quantities of Russian LNG and steelmaking coal in September, with total purchases of energy products hitting US\$50 billion since the war in Ukraine, reports Bloomberg News.

Coal imports from Russia jumped to 2.5 million tonnes in September, from 900,000 tonnes in the same month last year and 1.9 million tonnes in August.

LNG sales rose to 819,000 tonnes, despite a 12 per cent decline in China's overall purchases of the super-chilled fuel.

Crude oil imports from Russia were at 7.5 million tonnes last month, compared with 8.3 million tonnes in August and 6.1 million tonnes a year ago.

Total purchases of Russian energy slowed to \$7.5 billion from a revised record of \$8.4 billion in August.

It brings the total to \$51 billion in the seven months since the war in Ukraine began.

Over the same period in 2021, China's energy purchases from Russia were \$30 billion.

## Geopolitics

**Russia shows a 'rational' and 'responsible' attitude to nuclear war, says China** - Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi told his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, during a meeting at the Group of 20 (G20) summit that Russia's position that a nuclear war should not be fought showed a "rational" and "responsible" attitude.

Wang added during the meeting with Lavrov that China was pleased to see Russia signal its willingness to engage in dialogue over Ukraine and agree to resume the Black Sea grain-export deal, according to a Chinese foreign ministry statement.

"China is willing to work with Russia to push forward their high-level exchanges and communication in various fields, deepen bilateral practical cooperation and facilitate personnel exchanges," Wang was quoted as saying by the state news agency Xinhua.

**Russia and Turkey get closer as the war continues** - Despite growing Western sanctions on Russia due to the war, Turkey has instead strengthened its relationship with Moscow.

Since the beginning of the war, Turkey has never picked a side, and has maintained a relationship with Ukraine and Russia.

But trade has never been better between Ankara and Moscow, with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's favorability rating increasing as economic ties do.

**Comments** – (i) Turkey is a member of NATO and has to step a very fine line in this regard and (ii) As written previously in these Updates, Turkey is seeking to leverage for itself an enhanced if not strategic global role in future geopolitics.

**Disagreement emerged at a G20 summit** as the US and its allies backed a resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which Russia's foreign minister dismissed as unwarranted politicization. The summit on the Indonesian island of Bali is the first G20 leaders' meeting since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February.

Government ministers and negotiators from nearly 200 countries began the hard work of finding common ground at the annual U.N. climate talks for a deal based on a sketched first outline in the hands of delegates at the summit in Egypt. Here's what to watch today at COP27.

**'Now Is The Time' To End War, Zelenskyy Tells G20 As Fighting Rages In Eastern Ukraine** - Zelenskyy has told world leaders that the time to end Russia's war in Ukraine is "now" and called for the extension of a grain-export deal due to expire shortly, as heavy fighting continues in the eastern Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

"I am convinced that now is the time when the Russian destructive war must and can be stopped," Zelenskiy said in a video address to the Group of 20 (G20) summit in Bali, Indonesia, on November 15.

"It will save thousands of lives," he said.

But Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, the highest-ranking Russian official present at the G20 summit, said Kyiv's conditions for restarting talks with Moscow were "unrealistic."

"All problems are with the Ukrainian side, which is categorically refusing negotiations and putting forward conditions that are obviously unrealistic," Lavrov told reporters on November 15.

Lavrov also accused Western countries of trying to "politicize" a joint declaration at the summit. A draft declaration by G20 leaders seen by Reuters said "most" members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine.

"Yes, our Western colleagues tried in every way to make that declaration politicized and tried to push through language that implied condemning the actions of the Russian Federation on behalf of the entire G20, which includes us," Lavrov said.

In his video address, Zelenskyy ruled out a "Minsk 3 agreement," a reference to two failed cease-fire deals between Kyiv and Moscow in 2014 and 2015 over the status of the eastern Donbas region.

"We will not allow Russia to wait, build up its forces, and then start a new series of terror and global destabilization. There will be no Minsk 3, which Russia will violate immediately after the agreement," Zelenskyy said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov shortly afterward said Zelenskyy's comments confirmed that Kyiv is not interested in holding peace talks with Moscow.

Zelenskyy urged Moscow to withdraw all its forces from Ukraine and reaffirm Ukraine's territorial integrity, warning that Kyiv would not compromise its sovereignty, territory, or independence. He also called for all Ukrainian prisoners to be released.

Zelenskyy outlined several approaches to achieve peace, including ensuring nuclear and food safety, the ending of hostilities, and prevention of escalation.

He blasted "the crazy threats of nuclear weapons that Russian officials resort to," referring to rhetoric employed repeatedly by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

**Comment** – Such commentaries are a usual preliminary stage to negotiations where parties try to press advantage for their positions.

## Humanitarian

**Mass graves, torture chambers discovered in liberated Mykolaiv** - Ukraine officials have unearthed more Russian atrocities as horrors in the liberated Mykolaiv have been discovered.

Ivan Kukhta, who's head of the Sniguriv city military administration, said torture chambers and mass graves have been found as well as known looting by Russian soldiers who didn't leave much behind.

"They had time to get together, to collect all the looted property. The Russians took everything, all the equipment from utility companies, from private businesses, they took cars, tractors from private individuals," Kukhta wrote on Suspilne media. "It was a terrible mess, ripped out batteries and boilers, etc., everything possible was taken they took everything with them."

"There are a lot of stories of torture, abuse, people were taken to Kherson, to Kakhovka," Kukhta said. "Now we are finding tortured people, we have an understanding of where the mass graves are. There are many stories, and they are in one way: abuse, harassment. The Russians told the people of Snowy: "Here is Mykolaiv "It will fall, we will take Odesa, we will take Kyiv."

## Impacts

**Top Chinese official revealed 'discomfort' and 'embarrassment' over Russia's reckless behavior in Ukraine**, senior US official says before Biden sits down with Xi to set up 'guardrails' on US-China relations.

American officials said Monday they believe China is becomingly increasingly concerned and embarrassed about Russia's war in Ukraine and Vladimir Putin's rhetoric on nuclear weapons.

They spoke just ahead of Joe Biden's first meeting as president with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

Beijing's relationship with Moscow since the invasion of Ukraine will be one of the areas where Biden will want to get a handle on Xi's thinking.

The officials delivered an assessment of discussions at a summit of southeast Asian leaders in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, attended by the Chinese premier, Beijing's second most powerful figure.

'Premier Li Keqiang spoke rather extensively about China's policy towards Ukraine, put clear insistence on sovereignty, on the responsibility of nuclear threats, the need to ensure that nuclear weapons are not used in the way that some have suggested,' said an official on a briefing call with reporters.

On some issues there is undeniably some discomfort in Beijing about what we are seen in terms of reckless rhetoric and activities on the part of Russia.

It is also undeniable that China is probably both surprised and even a little bit embarrassed by the conduct of Russian military operations.

**Germany inaugurates first new LNG terminal** - The German government inaugurated its first floating terminal on Tuesday (15 November), built in record time and intended to receive liquefied natural gas as part of Berlin's plan to replace Russian gas, with the first regasification ship set to dock in mid-December.

Following Russia's attack on Ukraine, a halt in the supply of gas from Gazprom, and the subsequent destruction of the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, Germany is missing about 50 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas in yearly deliveries.

A hastily constructed infrastructure to facilitate the import of LNG is Berlin's way out. LNG is supercooled and highly pressurized gas, turned into a liquid state fit for long-haul transport. Turning it back into gas requires specialized equipment – so-called regasification units.

On Tuesday, Olaf Lies, the economy minister of the German state of Lower Saxony, toured the port of Wilhelmshaven. After six months, construction of the infrastructure to support an inbound floating LNG terminal (FSRU) – a pier, pipelines, and electricity lines – was completed.

"Germany is looking to Wilhelmshaven today. The new LNG terminal is a big step towards a secure energy supply," highlighted Lies, noting the early decision to focus on Wilhelmshaven and existing port infrastructure as the key drivers of speed, thanking "all planners, experts and construction companies involved."

**Russian State TV host says Kherson retreat may be a trap to lure NATO troops** - Russian state TV pundit appeared to suggest that his country's retreat from Kherson could be part of a "secret plan" to lure NATO troops into Ukraine to "destroy them."